

Background to the Video List

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[This document is part of the [Learner's Maya Glyph Guide](#).]

I have compiled a list of Maya-related videos available on the internet ([Videos](#)). My initial reason for compiling the list was to have convenient access to as many videos on Maya epigraphy as possible. This means that I attempted to find all the presentations from Maya conferences (*Maya at the Playa*, *Maya at the Lago*, EMC, etc) as well as lectures for the general public (for example, given by a guest lecturer at a museum). I feel that the covid pandemic actually led to a far greater number of lectures being recorded and uploaded to the internet, which has turned out to be quite a boon for Maya enthusiasts.

The scope of the list soon extended to videos on Maya-related topics other than epigraphy – history, religion, culture, art, architecture, food, etc. From there, it was only a small step to include even more peripheral topics like the Olmecs and Teotihuacan (though I didn't try to be as thorough for these as for the other categories).

I also tried to be as eclectic as possible in my selection. Of course, the videos featuring the major epigraphers (e.g., Coe, Houston, Martin, Prager, Saturno, Stuart, Tokovinine, Zender) formed the core, but I certainly didn't exclude videos produced by enthusiastic laypeople (e.g., travel accounts, amateur historians, etc). I've even included what appears to be a short presentation by some high-school students from Belize. In the same spirit, I applied very broad criteria for "genre". The core genre was lectures, but documentaries and interviews also found their way onto the list¹. Here too, I've not applied very strict criteria, and have included many of the *slightly* sensationalist documentaries, with dramatic background music and relating how mysterious the Maya civilization was, or how dramatic "The Collapse" was. Similarly, travelogues or nature documentaries with some Maya-related content have been included, even if this isn't the main thrust of the video. Short clips made by late teens where the Mayan or Spanish names are badly mispronounced are, however, excluded, as are sensationalist documentaries about human sacrifice. Travelogues with no narration and only a music soundtrack and/or shaky camera have been omitted. Slideshows of Maya art or of visits to archaeological sites, with no narration, have similarly been omitted. The same applies to content related to aliens, New Age ideas, or extremely non-mainstream theories about the origins or advanced technological level of the ancient Maya. One last category I excluded are videos where the audio-track is machine-generated, especially the early ones, where the voice is very "robot-like" and there is very little inflection and tone (there were only two or three such Maya-related videos, in any case). On the other hand, for videos which *did* get included, I didn't confine myself to the Classic and

¹ For me, the dividing line between a lecture and a documentary is generally quite clear – a single individual (an expert on the subject), in a Zoom meeting or on video standing on a stage, showing a series of relatively static slides is a lecture. In contrast, a video with moving images, outdoor scenes, background music and end credits, (with a narrator who might not necessarily be an expert on the subject) is a documentary. Nevertheless, there have been a few edge cases where I felt rather unsure of the category under which the video in question should be classed. Even the dividing line between a documentary and an interview is sometimes more blurred than one might expect. Webinars and video recordings of live seminars or discussion panels are classed as lectures – I feel that they have more in common with lectures than with documentaries. Travelogues are classified as documentaries, as are short tv news reports (e.g., of new discoveries).

Pre-Classic period, but included some videos on the Colonial period (e.g., on the *Popol Vuh*) and also on the modern Maya though here, again, I have not striven to be comprehensive.

The one very glaring gap in the list involves videos in Spanish. As I don't speak Spanish, I don't feel that I would do a very good job of compiling a similar list of such videos. Not only that, but the list was originally for my own private use (for citing in my notes interesting facts explained in the videos). Spanish-language videos couldn't contribute in any way in that activity. This is in contrast to my inclusion of Spanish-based material in written academic works. In this latter case, Google Translate has reached a stage of sufficient sophistication that this material can be helpful to me, and so I do use and include such references.

Of the videos that did finally end up on my list, I've tried to standardize the format of what information I record about each video. For videos available on YouTube (by far the most important single source), I record the YouTube title, the upload date, and as much of the text in the description box as possible. The only parts of the description box which I omit are requests for feedback, encouragement to click "Like" or to become a Patreon supporter, links to urls for merchandizing, etc. In other words, I try to include *everything* available which is directly related to the content of the video, without trying to editorialize and omit what I don't consider "relevant enough". This means that the level of detail in these descriptions can vary considerably, depending (as it does), on the amount of detail the uploader decided to include. In a very small number of cases, I feel that there's important information which hasn't been explicitly supplied in the text of the description box. That might be information available in the "About" section of the YouTube channel of the uploaded video. Or it might be information given verbally at the start of the video, or in the credits at the end. In such cases, I summarize that information and present it in square brackets, so that it's clear that this is editorial information supplied by me, rather than by the original uploader. I do however silently correct the occasional typo and sometimes improve the punctuation.

Finally, I record the total playing time. I think this is useful, as I (and any other person using the list) can quickly see which are the shorter videos, which might be nice to watch during brief breaks from the normal activities of daily life. Conversely, one can see which videos are really long, and hence decide to set aside more time later, to watch such videos properly.

In the process of compiling the list of videos uploaded to YouTube, I made use of the "suggested videos" which appears in the right-hand side. I was surprised to see how many videos turned up on these "suggested videos" lists, which didn't turn up when I put that topic into the YouTube search box. That is, if I had a video on (say) Maya religion in the main part of the YouTube screen, then I might see other videos on Maya religion in the right column. By going to those videos, yet further videos on Maya religion might appear in the right column. But the sum total of all the videos on Maya religion which turned up in this slow, iterative process was far higher than if I had put "Maya religion" into the YouTube search box.

In any case, this is the resulting list, which I will of course continue adding to. I hope that this list will be of benefit to users of the LMGG website.

Postscript

I've included 13 videos from the field of linguistics:

- Seven videos are explanations of ergativity, varying considerably in length from very short to somewhat longer. I found the concept very difficult and for a long time simply accepted the ergative-related constructs of Classic Maya as a given, mechanistically, without fully understanding the concept itself. These videos helped to get me over that particular hump.
- Three videos are about the Mayan language family, one of which is an in-depth interview with James Tandy, where Tandy explains about the evolution and characteristics of the entire family. I feel that these might be of interest to some learners of Classic Maya as well. They help to give some context to statements in academic papers and books referring to the descendants of Classic Maya words in the modern Mayan languages (“cognates”).
- Three further (very short) videos relate to the nature and pronunciation of glottalized consonants (and vowels). None of them refers directly to Classic Maya. One concerns the growing use of glottalized stops in Modern English; the second is a short demonstration of the sounds of Modern Yucatec; and the last is an explanation of glottalized consonants from a cross-linguistic point of view, i.e., across all the languages of the world. Despite their not directly addressing Classic Maya, I feel that all three nevertheless could be very helpful to learners trying to master these sounds in Classic Maya (they certainly helped me).
Particularly the second demonstrates the contrasts between glottalized consonants and their non-glottalized counterparts, and even covers the distinction between short, long, and glottalized vowels. The first video also discusses the initial glottal stop. This is obligatory in words “beginning with a vowel” (if one discounts the initial glottal stop) in German. This phenomenon – known as “hard attack” – is known but not obligatory in English, but is (apparently) gradually also becoming more common in English. Classic Maya is like German in that such a glottal stop is also obligatory in Classic Maya, for words “beginning in a vowel” (again, if one discounts the initial glottal stop). As in German, it’s not necessary to indicate this in the orthography (German orthography / Classic Maya transliteration), because it’s always present in this environment. Glottalized consonants are called ejectives in the first and last video, but this difference is just a matter of terminology, not of substance.